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ABSTRACT

In discussing what is meant by the concept "organization," the author raises the questions, "What is an organization that it can have such a thing as a goal?" and, assuming it appropriate to speak of organizational goals, "how do the goals of individuals bear on those of the organization?" The author submits that answers to these questions raise some serious doubts about the assumptions on which many change strategies appear to rest. He suggests that the concept of organization as a "structure" having functions and goals apart from the individuals who inhabit the structure should be modified. He contends that organizations should be regarded as entities through which people strive to achieve ends that are important or desirable to them. The author then examines the implications for organizational analysis and for change strategies should the modified definition of organization be accepted. (Author/DN)

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# ORGANIZATIONS AS SOCIAL INVENTIONS

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In common parlance among organizational change agents, there is often talk of the organization's health, the clarity of its goals, or its effectiveness in achieving its goals. The assumption underlying this talk appears to be that organizations are entities which strive to achieve goals and whose success in achieving them depends upon the structure or process within the organization. In this line of reasoning, one may improve the effectiveness of an organization by devising that structure or process which is best adapted to the ends it must achieve. While there is dispute about what to change within the organization, we usually agree that organizations are entities capable of improvement and that organizations have goals which would be better achieved if the organizations were larger, smaller, less bureaucratic, "healthier", more structured, or more something that changed internal structure and process. The point I wish to raise today is that strategies for changing organizations rest upon a particular view of what organizations are and how they behave with respect to the goals they are supposed to hold.

Within the general problem of what we mean by the concept "organization," I wish to raise two specific questions. These questions are first, "What is an organization that it can have such a thing as a goal?" and, secondly, "How do the goals of individuals bear upon those of the organization, if, indeed, it is appropriate to speak of organizational goals?" Clearly, these questions are inter-related and may, in fact, merely be different ways of asking whether organizations are something more than the sum of their parts. These are not new questions in organizational analysis and I do not propose to offer new answers to them. What I wish to do is to suggest that we seldom ask these questions or pay attention to

a compelling set of answers to them when we engage in efforts at organizational change. Such indifference might be justified except for the fact that adequate answers to these questions raise some serious doubts about the assumptions on which many change strategies appear to rest. These assumptions are that organizations do indeed have goals and that the kind or quality of structure and process within the organization has some bearing upon how well these goals are achieved. Let us look at these two questions briefly and then consider their implications for organizational change processes.

What Is An Organization That It May Have A Goal?

At a pragmatic level, we have no difficulty believing that organizations are real and that they have goals apart from those of specific individuals who may have involvement with them. Prisons, banks, schools, hospitals, political parties, and armies are but a few examples of organizations whose reality and whose goals the individual may deny only to his disadvantage or even at his peril. That these organizations are "real" and that they have different goals seems obvious. At least two major perspectives on organizations--bureaucratic theory and system theory--accept these assumptions. They accept them when they assert the reality of organizations apart from the individuals who inhabit them and when they assert the notion of organizational goals apart from those of individuals. Thus bureaucratic theories of organization find reality in the division of labour, in specialization of roles, and in other structural elements which define the organization and permit it to achieve pre-determined goals. In this view, organizations "planfully" solve problems, they "drive towards rationality," and they "invade" (Gouldner, 1958, p. 418) realms of action traditionally controlled by individuals. Thus the

organization in effect strips its members of their personal motives and replaces them with those which serve the purposes of the organization. Accepting this view of the power of organizations apart from people within them, Perrow argues that

> . . . people's attitudes are shaped at least as much by the organization in which they work as by their pre-existing attitudes. (Perrow, 1970, p. 4).

And again from Perrow:

> . . . a great deal of organizational effort is exerted to control the effects of extra-organizational influences upon personnel. Daily, people come contaminated into the organization. . . . Many of the irritating aspects of organizational structure are designed to control these sources of contamination. (Perrow, 1970, p. 52).

In contrast to the bureaucratic view of organizations, the systems perspective rejects the notion of the organization striving to achieve goals external to itself but retains the concept of organization as an entity apart from its members and with power over them. In the systems view of organizations, goals are the product of the organization successfully solving the survival problem in its environment. In this case, the goals of the organization may not be at all obvious as they are in bureaucratic theory. This idea of the organization responding like an organism to its environment and thus discovering an equilibrium or goal which enables it to survive in its environment is a recurrent theme among systems theorists. (Selznick, 1948; Etzioni, 1960; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Merton, 1949; Gouldner, 1959; Thompson and McEwen, 1958). Of course there are critics of bureaucratic and systems theory who proceed from a psychological viewpoint designed to take the individual into account. However, even these critics are apt to see the organization as a thing apart from its members. Thus Argyris (1964) advocates that organization structure be redesigned

to meet human needs--especially higher level needs like self-actualization--while Bennis (1966) recommends that organizations must undergo a change in culture to make them more "healthy" and to enable them to adjust, adapt, and respond to complex, turbulent environments. As Bennis sees it, then, organizations are not only entities capable of having goals, they are moreover entities which can respond rapidly to environmental stimuli and thus discover new goals which are appropriate to the environmental demands.

The point I wish to emphasize is that these views on organizations and these beliefs about what should be done to deal with their "problems" all rest upon an assumption: the assumption that an organization is an entity which has goals and which attempts to impose pattern or uniformity upon its members in line with those goals. These views imply a single, uniform responding entity which is the organization even though members may respond variously to it. Thus much effort is spent among those who see themselves as organizational diagnosticians and doctors in trying to develop satisfying or effective relationships between members and the organization on the one hand and between the organization and its environment on the other. This belief in the organization as a thing conveniently allows for assessment of it. One may ask either how well the organization satisfies its members needs or how well it achieves its goals. Where the organization is found wanting either as a satisfier of members' needs or as an instrument of goal achievement, the organization is revealed as needing change or improvement. Though the organizational doctors do not always agree on what to do with the diseased or ailing organization, there is no lack of prescriptions to deal with its maladies. In education these remedies vary from those that abolish the organization to those that merely transform it in some way.

And yet this notion of organization as a creation apart from people, as an entity capable of having goals and of responding to its environment creates a paradox. No matter how obvious it may appear that organizations are real nor how convenient it may be to deal with them conceptually as though they were real, organization theorists--if not men of practical affairs--must deal with some puzzling questions flowing from the idea of organizations as "real" things. If organizations are real but non-human, how can they have so human a thing as a goal and how can an organization behave, respond, or adapt when these are typically properties of organisms not organizations? While there may be many analogies between organizations and organisms or between organizations and complex interacting physical systems, it is one thing to say these systems are <u>like each other</u> and quite another to say <u>they are the same</u>. With some notable exceptions (Cyert and March, 1963; Simon, 1964), few organization theorists begin with the notion that organization goals are ideas held in the human mind rather than a property of an abstraction--the organization itself. With few exceptions (Silverman, 1970, p. 5), organization theorists fail to ask how it is that individuals perceive the goals of an organization and orient their behaviour towards it. In short, few organization theorists see organizations as entities which individuals create and which depend upon human acceptance and support. Instead, much of organization theory deals with human response to organization rather than with human activity in creating organizations.

The difference is important. The common view of organization sees it as a structure with rules, powers, and goals of its own. It is this structure, externally imposed, with which the individual must deal. Many

critics of organization therefore see organization as inherently opposed to human purpose and wish to destroy it in order to free man of its chains. Other critics merely wish to make organization compatible with human needs and desires. If we see organizations not as imposed on man but as created by him we begin to ask some different questions about organizations. In this view, individuals not only create the organization, they are the organization. To say that individuals create the organization and, indeed, are the organization is not to say that different individuals bring the same or similar ideas, aspirations, or needs to the organization. To see organization as created out of individual diversity is to recognize organization as a definition of social reality within which individuals interact; it is to see organization as (Silverman, 1970, p. 6) "the everyday picture of the social world" which the individual builds and regards as merely "what everybody knows." In answer to the first question posed at the outset of this paper, we may say that organizations have goals in the same way that individuals have goals except that, in the organization, the individual must concern himself not only with his own goals but with those of others as well. Thus the concept of organization we are dealing with here is not a single uniform entity but a multi-faceted notion reflecting what the individual sees as his social world and what meanings and purposes the individual brings to or takes from that reality.

Bavelas (1959-60, p. 498) baldly states the proposition basic to this notion of organization: "Human organizations are not biological organisms; they are social inventions." Following this line of thinking leads to the paradox that man not only creates his social reality, he then responds to it as something other than human invention. If organizations are a kind of invented social reality we should seek to understand them

(Silverman, 1970, pp. 143, 182, 228) in terms of the world-taken-for-granted by individuals involved with organizations or in terms of the individual's images of himself and of the organizations of which he is part. With this frame of reference, we should not be surprised to find that "organizational structure" has no uniform effect upon people but depends upon the person perceiving it and his definition of social reality. From this vantage point, too, we would probably regard it as useless to try to deal with a single organizational "structure" whether our aim was to abolish this structure, to change it, or to improve it. And with this view of organization, we would probably give up also attempts to judge the organization's effectiveness by comparing it to a single set of goals, whether these were external goals towards which bureaucracies are supposed to strive or whether these goals were those that organizations are thought to achieve through dynamic equilibrium with their environments.

Can Individual Goals Become Organizational Goals?

These considerations then raise the second question posed at the beginning of this paper: Given that individuals are in some way determinants of organization, how do goals of individuals get transformed into something we recognize as goals of the organization? To me the best answer to this question--though not a complete answer--is found in that tradition in organization theory (Simon, 1964; Cyert and March, 1963; Thompson, 1967) which views organization as a social reality within which individuals see rules, pressures, demands, powers, and dependencies. Organization thus becomes the perceived social reality within which individuals make decisions. The heart of this view is not a single abstraction called organization, but rather (Silverman, 1971, p. 136) varied perceptions by

individuals of what they can, should, or must do in dealing with others. When an individual shifts his frame of reference for decision-making, he thus shifts his "organization." These ideas require us to abandon notions of organizations striving to achieve externally set targets or to achieve a simple equilibrium with the environment. Rather the view suggested is one of bargaining and coalition among individuals among whom conflict is never really resolved. Some coalitions among organization members or between them and outsiders turn out to be viable--at least in the short run--thus giving members of these coalitions the power to allocate resources or to divide the labour in ways which seem good to them. The goals of the organization in this view become the present preoccupations and intentions of the dominant organizational coalition. This conception of organizational goals does not require us to regard them as some ultimate end-point towards which the entire organization moves, nor need we regard goals as a steady state characterizing organization-environment relationships. Instead organizational goals may be as fleeting as the membership of the dominant coalition; organizational goals may be as changeable as members' views on what is practical, desirable, or essential to do. Above all this view of organizational goals frees us from the need to see such goals as uniform and stable throughout the organization. Organizational goals are made understandable in human terms; they are as varied as are individuals and no more stable or rational than the individual.

What the proponents of this decision-making tradition in organization theory do not make clear is why and how others accept the definition of the situation made by dominant organizational coalitions. While it may help to resolve this problem by conceiving a balance between organizational

inducements and member contributions (March and Simon, 1958), the basic difficulty remains. We must explain the common but extraordinary situation in which we find members of organizations "actually performing tasks demanding a high degree of skill and involvement that are utterly remote from their personal interests and the rest of their cognitive field." (Burns, 1967, p. 133). By implication, then, we must begin to explain the behaviour of people in organizations in terms of the explanations and meanings which they themselves use, if we are to understand what is going on within those organizations. Instead of prescribing what kinds of behaviours would make for a healthy or effective organization if only people engaged in them, it might be better to find out first the motivations and goals that do in fact act as springs to individual action.

This line of thinking takes us back to an important but often neglected idea in the writings of Max Weber that different kinds of organizations rest upon different conceptions of authority. Elaborating on this idea, Simon (1957a, p.126; 1957b, pp. 108-110) pointed out that authority rests not with "persons of authority" but in a relationship between people built upon their beliefs about how they should behave towards each other. Thus in learning to believe in what one ought to do, one also shapes a role for oneself and ultimately creates an organization in which that role may be performed. Therefore the kinds of organization we live in derive not from their structure but from attitudes and experiences we bring to organizations from the wider society in which we live. To change organizations, then, requires more than a change in their structure; it requires changes in society itself and changes in meanings and purposes which individuals learn within their society.

This notion of organizations as dependent upon meanings and purposes which individuals bring from a wider society to organizations does not require that all individuals share the same meanings and purposes. In fact, the views I am outlining here should make us seek to discover the varying meanings and objectives which individuals bring to the organizations of which they are a part. We should look more carefully, too, for differences in objectives between different kinds of people in organizations and begin to relate these to differences in power or access to resources. In particular, it appears that we should look closely at this matter in people-processing organizations, that is, organizations like schools, hospitals and prisons. Many organizations of this kind face some kind of crisis today. In the past, clients of these organizations, were usually not regarded as members of the organization. They were the raw material upon which the structure and technology of the organization worked. This view turned out to be tenable only so long as the clients of these organizations accepted this definition themselves. What we are apparently witnessing in the crisis facing many organizations in the people-processing business is a shift in belief--a shift in goal--among those members of these organizations we usually call clients. Increasingly frequent prison riots may reflect a view growing among both prisoners and wardens alike (Rothman, 1972) that prisons are not places in which people should be put. Where prisoners used to strive to escape from prison, they now are likely to destroy the prison. Similarly new views are growing about what school ought to be and these are not usually views that can be found in official statements of educational objectives or in a functional analysis of school and environment relationships. Bereiter (1972, pp. 398-399) makes clear

how a set of new social "facts" can alter the whole basis of school as an institution even though these "facts" may be perceived and acted upon as goals only by a small minority :

> The declining faith of educators in the traditional school way of life can be traced back for decades. . . . What seems to be happening is that the perspective of the outer world is penetrating the school. The traditional school cannot survive such an invasion, for if goings on in school come to be judged by the same standards as goings on outside, they will be seen as ridiculous and the structure will collapse. You cannot have a room full of ten-year old Paul Goodmans and Edgar Z. Friedenbergs and hope to run a traditional school, especially if the teacher holds the same viewpoint.

Can these ideas I have spoken about today be expressed as a concept of organization? I began this paper by wanting to deny or modify the common notion of organization as a "structure" having functions and goals apart from the individuals who inhabit the structure. I have emphasized the goals and meanings which individuals bring to their involvement with organizations. But what is that organization if it is not to be seen as separate from individuals? At the present time, I find myself unable to answer this question satisfactorily. Burns (1967, p. 132) provides us with a beginning point when he speaks of organization as a "transducer" connecting a set of demands with a set of action consequences. Now "transducer" is a term from physics designating a device which receives power in one form and transforms it into another. Thus a telephone transforms electric power into acoustic power. And similarly we may see organizations as patterns of action among individuals in which they strive to transform their demands or goals into consequences or outcomes. While this conception of organization permits us to speak of dominant sets of demands among certain individuals, and while this conception permits us to explore how individuals caught together in a common sphere of action

spend the power and resources at their command, we need not think in this view of organization that the demands of all individuals are met nor indeed that action within a given sphere is capable of satisfying all demands brought to bear within it. Our conceptions of organizations must be as complex as is the reality which we are trying to deal with.

## Some Speculations and Implications

I began this paper by suggesting that we lack an adequate concept of organization, though we often behave as though we have one when it comes to assessing organizations and changing them when we believe they fall short in some way. I suggested that the concept of organization we often use implies a structure independent of the people in the organization and a set of goals implicit in that structure. Acting on this concept of organization, many strategies for improving organization strive to reshape the structure, to reformulate its goals, or to achieve a better integration of the individual with the structure. In opposition to these views I have put forward an alternate but less commonly held view that organizations are entities through which people strive to achieve ends that are important or desirable to them. This alternate view holds that there is no overriding purpose which organizations serve and no single structure through which they operate; rather organizations encorporate a multiplicity of views and purposes and uncertain means and circumstances for achieving them. Rather than attempting to develop this admittedly incomplete notion any further, I might more readily clarify it by asking what its implications are for organizational analysis and for change strategies based upon such analysis.

Received notion of organization theory. What seems extraordinary in much of contemporary organizational analysis is that views which see organizations as "things"--whether these things be mechanistic or organismic--seem always to prevail over theories which see organizations as extensions of individuals. Thus the traditions which deal with organizations as bureaucracies or as systems are longer and more extensive than the March and Simon tradition which sees organizations as the patterns of choice individuals make in pursuit of ends that are meaningful to them. It is this latter tradition which complexifies organizations because they may no longer be understood as uniform entities having limited purposes and a single structure to serve those purposes. Instead organizations become as complex as human meanings and purposes.

In my view, the organizational complexity we face no longer permits us to deal with organizations as if they had a single structure and a single set of objectives. If this judgement is at all valid, then we should desist in our efforts directed at discovering that organizational structure or behaviour which is best adapted to the environment or which makes the organization most effective. Instead we should put more effort into understanding the specific meanings, purposes, and problems of individuals involved in specific organizations. Only by studying variables of this kind and by exploring their relationships to outcomes can some science of organization emerge. Thompson (1967, pp. 84-87) has suggested that the assessment of organizations depends upon our beliefs about what it is desirable for an organization to do and our knowledge of means to achieve those ends. Where there is dispute about ends, means, and outcomes--as appears to be the case with schools--we should have little faith in those

organizational doctors who are so ready to diagnose organizational ailments and offer prescriptions for prompt recovery. Surely, as a minimum, we should be more careful than we usually are about making prescriptions for organizational change that assume similar dynamics in the operation of most if not all organizations. Although prescriptive organization theory--of which change theory is surely an example--is often based almost exclusively upon study of economic organizations, one seldom gets the feeling that prescriptions for educational change are based upon theories and understandings that regard schools as unique entities. Organizational theories seem all too ready to assume that concepts like bureaucracy, expertise, supervision, technology, workflow, and a host of others have the same meaning in organizations of all kinds regardless of the nature of the individuals involved in the organizations, the goals they pursue, and the cultural environment from which they come.

The propositions I am advancing today question the notion of a single theory of organization and of a single organizational change strategy appropriate to it. Yet few strategies for change in education try to give us a view of what this thing called "organization" is that it can be shaped and moulded and made "better". We seldom get the impression from reading the change literature that "organizations" may vary depending on where we find them and who is in them. A contrary view has been expressed forcefully by Mayntz (1964, pp. 113-4):

> The major critical argument which follows is that propositions which hold for such diverse phenomena as an army, a trade union, and a university, must necessarily be either trivial or so abstract as to tell hardly anything of interest about concrete reality. . . . After all, the distinct character of an organization is certainly determined, among other things, by the nature, interests, and values of those who are instrumental in maintaining it.

This argument suggests that organization theorists have been so busy defining the forest that they have failed to notice differences among the trees--and worse--have ignored relevant data that are not trees at all.

Organizations as they are. If organization theorists and change agents took seriously the views propounded here, they would put more emphasis upon open-ended inquiry into organizations and less upon strategies for improving them. Justification for this view rests on the assumption that present organization theory tells us too little about organizations as they really are and too much about the biases of the theorists and change agents. Thus as organization theorists we have spent much time saying that organizations ought to be "healthy" or that individuals ought to find fulfilment within them. There is virtually no end of statements that organizations ought to be adapted to their environments nor to prescriptions for improving that adaptation.

Instead of trying to build or verify more grand theory about organizations and instead of trying to remodel organizations the way they ought to be, it might be better to find out how organizations are able to survive in their supposedly crippled, ill-adapted, or non-satisfying forms. Such an investigation will take us into a study of human purpose and interaction within organization; it will take us into the study of individual reaction to role structure rather than into explanations of why certain role structure are "necessary." In looking at organizations more squarely as they are, we will have to start looking at schools as schools and not as some presumed sub-species of an ideal type called organization. For all their acknowledged importance, it is extraordinary how little we know and study schools as organizations in their own right. Instead when

we theorize about schools as organizations, we are likely to borrow ideas and models from other areas of organizational study. When we come to analyze or improve schools we are apt to reach for concepts developed to describe other kinds of organizations. Thus much of our effort to understand schools as organizations is cast in terms of bureaucratic theory, general social structure, or industrial psychology and sociology. While extensions to schools from these other fields of study may "work" in some sense, they cannot substitute for a more basic understanding of schools in their own terms.

Understanding schools in their own terms will require more direct and active attention to understanding school experience for its own sake. For this purpose, a comparative and historical perspective, as Mayntz(1964) and Burns(1967) suggest, is essential. We must begin to understand more thoroughly and deeply the varieties of experience people have within the organizations we call schools and we must not limit the experiences studied to those of particular groups. The varied and often conflicting views of teachers and administrators are important but we need also to know about pupils, parents, and school board members and to know them within a perspective which relates these various groups to each other. We need to compare the meanings, experiences, and understandings found in particular schools in one time and place with those found in other times and places. It is only through such comparison that we may come to understand the frame of reference, the world-taken-for-granted, which defines the organization we call schools. In abandoning received theories about organizations in general and about schools in particular, we will have to look to a new kind of research--one that builds theory from the data rather than one that selects data to confirm theories developed apart from the data. This requirement directs

us to theory built from observations in specific organizations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Center for New Schools, 1972); it directs us as well to understanding the actions, purposes, and experiences of organizational members in terms that make sense to them (Silverman, 1970).

Excessive concern with structure and process. In recent years, there has been what may be described as an excessive concern for the internal structure and process of organizations. This concern flows from the belief that organizations have goals and that if we can just get the structure or process "right", organizations would be more effective in achieving goals or better adapted to their environments. For example, a few years ago, educational administrators were much concerned with the "organizational climate" of schools (Halpin and Croft, 1963) and we came to believe that organizations had climates in about the same way that people had personalities. The discovery or belief that organizations have climates led, of course, to judgements about which climates were good and which were bad. Since measuring a school climate required only the administration of a few questionnaires and some whiz-bang factor analyses, it was easy enough to diagnose personality ailments in school organization and to suggest that those organizations with bad personalities should improve them. This kind of analysis is like earlier studies of leader behaviour or later ones concerned with organizational health in that they all attempt to identify a single, critical variable within the organization which may be manipulated to improve it. What these analyses fail to tell us is how leadership, climate, or health arises or what these notions mean to persons involved in the organization. Lacking this understanding, it appears to me, that there is really very little we can do to "improve" leadership, climate, or health in an organization.

Radical critics of education take the concern for structure and process one step further than more conventional organizational analysts. Where the conventional analyst is likely to strive to get the "right" structure or process in an organization, the radical critic is apt to believe that there is something inherently wrong with organizational structure and that it exerts a baneful effect upon the human personality. The belief dies hard that organizational structure is "real" and independent of human meaning and purpose. We begin to get a glimmer of what we are dealing with in organizational structure and human response to it when we look at the experiences of some of the radical critics of education in their efforts to build better schools. What have their reforms wrought? The evidence is incomplete but provocative: The freedom of the alternative school turns out to be a failure when it comes to ensuring that all children learn to read and do arithmetic (Kozol, 1972). Decentralization of education leaves pressing social problems unsolved and gives expression to some human values that are abhorrent to radical critics (Katz, 1971, p. 136). "Organic growth" in an organization and wide-spread participation in decision-making lead not to harmony and truth but conflict and stress:

> . . . The experience of Metro and other alternative schools suggests that what emerges "organically" in an alternative school is not a new person or community, but rather those deeply ingrained patterns of thought and action of the traditional society and the patterns of functioning that govern the operation of any complex organization. (Center for New Schools, 1972, p. 336).

It is exactly those "deeply ingrained patterns of thought and action" which we must begin to understand if we are to understand organizations and to change them. Shifting the external trappings of organization--which we may call organization structure if we wish--turns out to be

easier than altering the deeper meanings and purposes which people express through organization. Usually we are aware of these meanings and purposes only when we try to change them in ourselves or others. Thus some radical critics of education have become painfully aware of differences between their own and others' values when they removed the conventional structures of organization. The result was not to abolish the problems which they saw as inherent in structure but to discover these problems in a new form. To explain this outcome we are forced to see problems of organizational structure as inherent not in structure itself but in the human meanings and purposes which support that structure. Thus it appears that we cannot solve organizational problems by either abolishing or improving structure alone. We may begin to deal with some intractable organizational problems by looking at their human foundations.

What I am suggesting in this critique is that we begin to look systematically at the way we build our organizational worlds before we prescribe solutions to all organizational ills. There is a kind of cultural imperialism or arrogance that goes with prescribing how organizations ought to be unless we know how individuals interpret and respond to the organizational world in which they now live. In the city in which I live, educational radicals recently won a hard fight to permit parents in a lower socio-economic community the right to participate in the selection of the school principal. The parents promptly met and decided by a large majority that they did not want to participate in such a selection. In one of my own projects, we persuaded a rural school system to consult the community about its objectives for schools. To our surprise, about the only large group interested in such matters were the

professional educators of the county. What interested the public in the county about the operation of schools, the professional educators tended to regard as matters for professional not public decision. What we may learn from these anomalous events--anomalous from the perspective of certain theories about how people ought to behave to organizational structure--is that we need to know much more about how people are in fact involved with organizations and whose views within them command decision-making powers.

Action as ends and means. In the conventional way of looking at organizations it is usual to think of actions coordinated--well or ill--toward the attainment of some end. This end is the goal of the organization and the criterion against which the success of the organization is to be measured. This view of organizational goals not only makes them abstract, it masks the variety of specific goals which individuals within the organization may have. In education, for example, we often speak of formal goals as defining the attitudes, knowledge, and skills which pupils should acquire in school. Are these goals which actually energize the action of people involved with schools? Surely we can assert that the formal goals of education govern the behaviour of people in schools only if we ignore other more powerful springs to action operating in many people or if we believe that people devise their present, specific activities out of distant, abstract goals.

Other notions of organizational goals deal with needs--the needs of individuals or of the organization itself. Individuals are believed to "need" self-actualization and organizations are believed to "need" to grow, adapt, or solve problems. These notions fail to describe general organizational goals (Silverman, 1970, pp. 89-92) because by no means all individuals or

organizations appear to have these needs. Some recent thinking in organizational theory (Perrow, 1970, pp. 133-74) acknowledges that organizations may vary according to the emphasis they place on some highly diverse goals. These goals range from definitions of organizational output through desires for the quality of organizational life to intentions about the application of organizational power. While this expansion of the concept of organization goal is useful, it still manages to suggest a single set of goals shared uniformly throughout the organization.

If on the other hand we were to move in the Action tradition (Silverman, 1970, pp. 126-146; Cyert and March, 1963, pp. 26-43), we would begin to look at the diversity of objectives which different people in an organization can have and begin to explore how these shift under different organizational circumstances. Perhaps we might begin to realize that many actions in organizations are best seen not as means towards some ultimate end but rather as ends in themselves. I am sure there are many people involved with schools for whom certain educational end products are important goals. I am also fairly sure there are many others for whom process is more important than product. There are those among us who simply believe in "open schools", in "strict discipline", or in a host of other ways for defining the school organization. I suspect that these beliefs do not represent means towards ends but are rather ends in themselves. Thus for some of us participation, openness, authenticity, and trust are good things; others may value knowledge, achievement, competition, and "high standards." Some of these characteristics may be thought of as ends in themselves, others may be thought of as means to other ends. Achievement of some of these goals may be assessed "objectively" by external evaluators others only

"subjectively" by those involved. My point is only that we need to know more about what objectives people in schools have and to discover how they change and whose goals "hold the day" when it comes to conflict and disagreement over what should be done, how, when, where and to whom. Answers to these questions may not only give us a better notion of what goes on within school structure, it may make us more cautious in assessing schools according to a narrow set of summative criteria and less willing to perscribe single solutions for improving schools.

Technology, goals, and effectiveness. The notion of effectiveness in organizations implies accepted goals and reliable means for achieving them. Conceiving technology as "reliable means for achieving goals", (Thompson, 1967, p. 14) conventional theory sees organizations as striving to increase the reliability of technology or to reduce the cost of its application. This notion of organizational effectiveness requires revision if, as this paper suggests, we may no longer think of a simple set of organization goals nor indeed rely on the notion of an abstract entity--the organization--which holds the goals. The view of organizations as reflections of varied human purposes makes it difficult if not impossible to apply simple criteria for measurement of organizational effectiveness. The basic difficulty is that we cannot speak--as does so much of applied organization theory--about increasing organizational effectiveness unless we accomplish two clear but often neglected tasks. One is to identify the shifting, complex goals which people involved with an organization actually hold for that organization. The second is to discover means for achieving these goals. Implied in these tasks is a third one: the task of determining

which goals are to be sought and which abandoned. It is my contention that we might better carry out this third task--a political one--if we completed the other two first, since we would then have a sounder base for designing organizations to achieve known ends. This contention rests on the simple idea that, if we could better discover what goals people really desired, we could determine better how to achieve them. This idea implies abandoning in education our pursuit of a lofty set of ideals which are presumably good for everybody and to which everyone ought to strive. It implies trying to shape schools as organizations which fulfil the desires of those involved with them.

Perhaps one of the basic difficulties we face in changing organizations and in making them more effective is our tendency to regard goals as endpoints which serve to motivate current activities, but which are themselves seldom attained or enjoyed in the here-and-now. Some commentators (Soelberg, 1965, p. 16) see all human behavior as explainable in terms of goals to which it is directed. Others (Vroom, 1965, p. 16), while recognizing that some activities may be ends in themselves, consider most human activity to be goal directed. The question of what motivates men in organizations to action is, of course, an empirical one. I wish to point out here only that more goals than we usually recognize in organizational life may fall in the category "things it is right to do" rather than in the category "ends that are to be accomplished." The one kind of goal is oriented to the present and the other to the future, and I suggest that many people are present-oriented rather than future-oriented as good, efficiency-minded organization theory requires them to be.

Thus a problem in making organizations more effective may be that many people do not hold goals for them in the sense of ends that the organization is to accomplish. Rather these people merely hold a set of beliefs about what it is right to do in an organization. The person who holds that a given percentage of the school budget should be devoted to research is expressing a belief about what it is right to do in the organization rather than a preference for an end the organization should accomplish. Such a person is satisfied--although perhaps temporarily--by the allocation of money to research not by the product of research. It is my suspicion that many goals in education are of this type and reflect our beliefs about the quality of experience we desire to have in schools, the way resources are to be distributed, or the ways people should behave toward each other. For these kinds of goals, technology is not necessary: people in organizations are either able to carry out their beliefs in behavior or they are not able to do so.

Other goals in education represent ends to be accomplished in the future through the direction and coordination of activities in the present. Many of the standard goals of education are of this type in that they describe skills to be acquired or knowledge to be attained. For these kinds of goals, technology is essential in that it is an instrument for the accomplishment of the goals.

Perhaps we should recognize that these two kinds of goals are often interwoven in the organizations we call schools. For example, it is a widely accepted goal that children should learn to read in school and, indeed, even children may hold this goal. Now, in my view, such a goal is talking about an end-point to be attained and therefore calls into play the

question of what technology is effective in teaching children to read. Inevitably, however, in trying to apply technology in pursuit of a reading goal, we will encounter other kinds of goals--goals that express people's beliefs about how that technology should be used. Or we may say that technology used in pursuit of end-point goals requires people involved with the technology to accept both the technology and the circumstances it is to be used in. People are thus likely to express goals having to do with the climate of the classroom in which the reading instruction takes place or they have preferences about the content of the reading material itself. Rationality in the design of organizations seems to require that we separate decisions with respect to these two kinds of goals. We must ask what ends it is possible to accomplish with existing educational technology and we must ask under what conditions we are to apply that technology. In making decisions about these two kinds of goals, we should not believe that people are invariably satisfied as long as end-point goals are being achieved nor that intended end-point goals are being achieved as long as people are satisfied by current circumstances.

If Bereiter (1972) is correct, schools have the technology to accomplish only a very limited set of end-point goals. We cannot, he says, educate children in the sense of building wholesome personalities and responsible citizens. What we can do is make children (and possibly their parents) happy in school and we can train them, where we have developed the technologies, to perform certain skills involved in reading, calculation, and playing games or musical instruments. This view brings us to some puzzeling questions. What are schools and what is going on in them? What maintains such elaborate structures for such apparently modest returns?

How do different people see schools and explain their behavior within them? What alternative designs for schools might better meet the ends of those involved with them? We may discover answers to these questions by looking more closely at the actual goals of individuals and groups involved in schools rather than by trying to maximize the effectiveness of the organization as a whole in relation to a set of goals that someone thinks people in schools do--or at least ought to--pursue. In this way, we will become concerned not only for a variety of goals and with technologies or strategies for accomplishing them, but we will also explore the process by which people come to believe in goals and work to achieve them. In short we will study with new eyes how people build organizations.

## Conclusion

Most theories of organization grossly simplify the nature of the reality they deal with. The drive to see organizations as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved with them blinds us to the complexity and variety of organizations people create around themselves. It leads us to believe that it is some abstract thing called "organization" which must be changed rather than socially maintained beliefs about how people should relate to each other and how they may attain desired goals. The closer we look at organizations the more likely we are to find expressions of diverse human meanings. The focus of investigation should not be, "What can be done to improve this organization?" but, "Whose meanings define what is right to do among people here involved with each other?" The difference in these questions is, of course, the difference between ought and is. In insisting on the separation of these questions when he tried to understand the operation of the Florentine state, Machiavelli earned a reputation for immorality (Bauer and Gergen, 1968, p. 6), although he actually gave us no clue as to his stand on the issues he analyzed. Machiavelli's reputation should confirm the human tendency to impose meaning on the world in which we live and thereafter to judge the outcome. When we come to judge our organizations as artifacts of human creation, we may come to agree with Cassius:

> The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars,
> But in ourselves. . . .

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